



The Rail Gunner Weekly

41st Fires Brigade



1-21 FA



2-20 FA



589th BSB



HHB

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A few words from the Rail Gunner Public Affairs NCOIC

As we wind down our time here at FOB Delta, I would like to take a moment and thank everyone in their support of our public affairs mission in Iraq. Although *The Rail Gunner Weekly* may not have had vivacious verbiage or colossal colloquialisms that would challenge your psyches, I hope that it kept you informed of the happenings on FOB Delta and in Wasit province.

I would like to thank Col. Francey and Command Sgt. Maj. Hughes for allowing us the latitude to conduct our operations with the freedom and trust to tell the Rail Gunner story. It is very fortunate to be assigned to a command team that has such a positive attitude and support for public affairs operations.

Thank you to all the units that cooperated with our requests and supported our mission by giving up seats on convoys, putting up with our questions and dealing with our persistence to take so many photographs. I know my staff and your families appreciate it.

I would like to thank the families for their support of their Soldiers and I hope you looked forward to each edition of *The Rail Gunner Weekly*. If we did our job right, we kept you informed of what your loved ones

were doing and the progress we made here over the last 14 months.

Finally I would like to thank my team: Sgt. Churchill and 1st Lt. Bryant. Their daily contributions made the public affairs mission a success. Their hard work and dedication made sure that our office operated smoothly and that we had a newsletter to distribute every week.

I have been fortunate enough to have seen a lot of different things throughout the duration of the deployment and as we get ready to leave here I can say without a doubt that the 41st Fires Brigade made a positive impact on the people of Wasit province and have given them a chance for a prosperous future.

Sometimes it's hard to see the big picture when your nose is to the grindstone every day; I only hope that through our efforts you were able to see how much of a difference the Soldiers of this brigade made.

Thanks for all your support!

Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson
41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs NCOIC

Advon takes first step back to Fort Hood



Left: Command Sgt. Maj. Kelvin Hughes, 41st Fires Brigade, says good-bye to Capt. Adam Ropelewski, commander, Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment as Ropelewski and the rest of the advanced echelon team get on the plane to take them to Kuwait, where they will outprocess from theater before heading to Fort Hood.

Bottom left: Col. Dick Francey, commander, 41st Fires Bde., shares parting words with the brigade headquarters battery's 1st Sgt. James Childers.

Bottom right: Francey shakes hands with Capt. Eric Robertson, who filled a variety of positions in the brigade during the Rail Gunners' Operation Iraqi Freedom 08-09 deployment.

Photos by Sgt. Allison Churchill, 41st Fires Bde. PAO



Deep Strike prepares to say good-bye

By **Sgt. Allison Churchill**
41st Fires Bde. PAO

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, gathered July 17 for a prayer breakfast at the Pavilion.

The Deep Strike Soldiers were treated to music and speeches on leadership and spiritual battle readiness while they dined.

The formal part of the program kicked off with 1st Sgt. Anthony Iglehart, Battery C, sharing his thoughts on the similarities between leadership and prayer.

"Leadership and prayer are words requiring and involving great action. Leadership and prayer make the impossible possible," said Iglehart.

Iglehart encouraged his fellow leaders to use prayer to guide their decisions.

"The paths upon which we travel are unknown and many unseen and unexpected dangers await us. Even among our most trusted comrades, there is still the constant need of divine wisdom, sustenance and guidance. For leaders with a spiritual foundation this wisdom, sustenance and guidance can be acquired through prayer," said Iglehart.

The guest speaker, Lt. Col. Alan Sconiers, logistics support officer, Logistics Civil Augmentation Program, Army Material Command, encouraged Soldiers to put their "spiritual body armor" on before going home.

Sconiers was arrested for domestic violence shortly after returning from Operation Desert Storm, where he served as a military policeman. He said he hadn't prepared himself for the battle at home.

Sconiers said no charges were filed against



The FOB Delta Gospel Choir performs as Soldiers dine at the 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, Prayer Breakfast July 17 at the Pavilion.

Photo by Sgt. Allison Churchill, 41st Fires Bde. PAO

him for the arrest, but the self-proclaimed "Bible addict" said he learned during that time, when he was also suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, that just being a good person isn't enough to help you avoid bad times.

"God knows good people can handle bad times," said Sconiers.

Chaplain (Capt.) Joshua Ade, Deep Strike's chaplain, said when he met Sconiers and learned he has 23 years of Army experience and that Sconiers is a licensed minister, he thought Sconiers could share advice with the

2-20 FA Soldiers.

"His experiences in all of these areas will help most of our Soldiers to have a proper strategy before they go home so that they will not go and do something negative," said Ade.

The prayer breakfast was the first and last opportunity for the battalion's Soldiers to sit down together since August 2008, when the batteries were sent to separate joint security stations. The battalion redeploys with the rest of 41st Fires Brigade in late July and early August.



Far left: 1st Sgt. Anthony Iglehart, Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, speaks about the parallels between leadership and prayer at a prayer breakfast held by the battalion July 17 at the Pavilion.

Top: Lt. Col. Alan Sconiers, logistics support officer, LOGCAP, gives personal testimony to the importance of being "spiritually battle ready" when redeploying during a prayer breakfast held by 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, at the Pavilion July 17.



Bottom: Chaplain (Capt.) Ashley Payne, 589th Brigade Support Battalion, 41st Fires Brigade, leads the Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, in the invocation at the 2-20 FA prayer breakfast July 17 at the Pavilion.

*Photos by Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO*

Wasit IP mobile training team trains their own



Left: Capt. Hayder Adnan Ali, IP Liaison to Coalition Forces, asks one of the trainees a question about proper shooting techniques from the prone position while Sgt. Hayder demonstrates during their training at the IP provincial headquarters July 20.

Right: Sgt. Hayder Sahib Silan, Wasit IP MTT instructor explains to IP trainees the proper positioning for firing an AK-47 while standing, July 20.

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson, 41st Fires Bde. PAO

By Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson
41st Fires Bde. PAO

Iraqi Police in Wasit province are now capable of sustaining their own training needs after Coalition Forces leave Iraq thanks to a coordinated effort between the Iraqi Police Advisor Teams, 772nd Military Police Company and the Wasit IP Provincial Headquarters.

The effort established an IP mobile training team that can conduct training at the provincial headquarters as well as travel to IP stations throughout the province to conduct training as well as train-the-trainers at each IP station so the separate units can continue to train their policemen on their own.

"It's most important to me to let the world know that with the support of Coalition Forces, the 41st Fires Bde., 772nd MP Co., and the Iraqi Police training teams, the creation of this mobile training team not only readies the progress for the future but we are ready to stand by and stop any kind of enemy because when you get good training and good policeman, you can fight the enemy and protect your community," said Capt. Hayder Adnan Ali, IP liaison to Coalition Forces.

The focus of the day on July 17 at the provincial headquarters was firearms training for the IP trainees and one of the MTT instructors knows how important it is that the recruits receive quality training.

"I like to teach my training ideas and training goals to the students because I know that when I stand and fight against terrorism and any enemy against our country or while protecting all our communities, buildings and people's lives, these recruits will be standing beside me and I will know that they have been trained right," said Sgt. Hayder Sahib Silan, Wasit IP MTT instructor.

"This is the first province in Iraq to have this mobile training team. The other provinces rely on their academies and the Coalition led Police training teams, but here in Wasit we have the first independent, fully trained Iraqi mobile training team responsible for professional development and training of the Iraqi Police in Wasit," said Capt. Hayder.

The mobile training team also ensures that the Iraqi Police will be able to conduct training even when they can't afford to send new recruits to the police academy.

"Sometimes we don't have the time to send them to the academy or we don't have the budget to house, feed and put electricity in the academy so the mobile team can go out to all the units anytime; they are ready to go and train," said Capt. Hayder.

The curriculum for the training was developed through Coalition Forces and Ministry of Interior lesson plans and combined into a simple, comprehensive training plan that encompasses both basic and advanced police training.

"This program has been a complete success with the collaboration of the IPs, IPAs and MPs and we are looking to add more police mobile

training teams in each district to ensure adequate instructors for the whole province," said Staff Sgt. Elton Dean, headquarters squad leader, 772nd MP Co.

"Every time we visit the instructors and trainees you can tell that they are putting the lessons that they learned in the instructor course to use; it is apparent in the way they conduct the classes, how professional they look and how the students improve week-to-week," added Dean from Douglas, Mass.

"It was awesome to see the instructors from the selection process, the training and team building at the instructor training course to how they conducted their first class," said Dean.

The mobile training team is made up of seven instructors and three officers who handle the administration and mentorship responsibilities. The 772nd MP Co., will continue to partner with the Wasit IPs until the unit is scheduled to redeploy in October.

Worship Opportunities

Sunday

Chapel 1

Traditional Protestant	0900
Latter-day Saints	1030
Gospel Service	1300

Tuesday

Mayor Cell

Bible Study	1930
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Chapel 1

Liturgy of the Word (Catholic Service)	1930
Bible Study	2000

Thursday

TMC

Bible Study	1930
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Saturday

Chapel 1

Christian Movie Night	2000
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Wasit Intel Conference discusses new capabilities

By Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson
41st Fires Bde. PAO

Members of the Wasit intelligence community met Monday at the Iraqi Police Provincial Headquarters for the Iraqi Security Forces Intelligence Conference and discussed innovations in professional development that is available through their own intelligence community.

Iraqi Air Force 1st Lt. Thimir Hamid briefed the group comprising of intelligence professionals including members from: 41st Fires Brigade; 1st Battalion, 77th Field Artillery Regiment; 32nd Iraqi Army Brigade; Iraqi Police; Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement, National Information and Investigations Agency, Director General for Intelligence and Security, and other intelligence agencies that would greatly benefit from the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that the Iraqi Air Force can offer.

"I briefed today on the King Air aircraft's capabilities for reconnaissance targets provided by the Iraqi Air Force to include different kinds of products and targeting capabilities the customer might want," explained Thimir.

The Iraqi Air Force's King Air aircraft is similar to the U.S. Air Force's MC-12 Liberty aircraft which provide aerial intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support to the ground force commanders for their respective countries.

The added capability of imagery intelligence combined with human intelligence is another piece of the intelligence puzzle which paints a better intelligence picture for the Iraqi intelligence community, according to Maj. Jennifer Finch, 41st Fires Bde., intelligence officer.

"What the Air Force brought in was another



The King Air aircraft that the Iraqi Air Force uses for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in support of the intelligence missions in Wasit Province and Iraq.

Photo courtesy of the Iraqi Air Force

intelligence discipline which they can use for imagery intelligence to cross queue with human intelligence to fortify collection; it gives the Iraqis another capability that they don't have to rely on any other forces for," said Finch, from Goose Creek, S.C.

Finch said that the ability to have self-sustaining imagery intelligence is a huge step for the Wasit intelligence community.

"What's monumental about it is that this is now an Iraqi system that they will use by processing the request and reporting through Iraqis, by Iraqis and solely for Iraqis," said Finch.

The intelligence fusion group has grown from the agencies not even talking to each other 14 months ago to nine different Iraqi intelligence agencies meeting weekly to share information, said Finch, who is also glad to have been a part of this historical intelligence evolution.

"I feel really good to be able to participate in this historic event, working with the Iraqi Air Force and the Wasit intelligence community," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Paul Valenzuela, Advisor to the Iraqi Air Force on FOB Delta, from Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

Valenzuela's coordination between the Iraqi Air Force, 41st Fires Brigade intelligence section and the Wasit Intel Fusion Group made the presentation possible and provided the opportunity for future joint operations between the Iraqi military and security forces, said Finch.

The Wasit intelligence community still has plenty of room for improvement said Finch, but through the hard work of Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces partnership and collaboration, she hopes to see the Iraqi intelligence community continue to evolve under the leadership of the Wasit Province Director of National Investigations and Information Agency.

Iron Caissons become citizens on Independence Day

By Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO

Five Soldiers in 589th Brigade Support Battalion joined nearly 270 other service members to become United States citizens on July 4 at Al Faw Palace, Camp Victory.

Though they started out in different places, all believe their citizenship and service will lead to a better life.

"I'm proud to serve the country that gave me my wife and job," said Spc. Semih Ciftci, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 589th Brigade Support Battalion, 41st Fires Brigade.

Ciftci moved to the United States from Istanbul, Turkey, in 2001 after completing a degree in mechanical engineering and spending some time serving in the Turkish army. He took English as a Second Language at Arkansas State University, where he met his wife, a professor in the English department.

By 2004 Ciftci had a green card, but it would only allow him to visit Turkey, where his parents and other family members still live, for six months and still be allowed back into the U.S.

Ciftci decided to join the U.S. Army after working a variety of jobs and returning to school to study computer science. Although he couldn't immediately have the same rank he'd held in the Turkish army, "I had two choices: I could be out or I could have any (military occupational specialty)," said Ciftci.

He said he got a lot out of the deployment: he worked as a cook at one of the five joint security stations the brigade manned and got to meet Vice

President Joseph Biden and Multi-National Force – Iraq Commanding General Gen. Ray Odierno at the naturalization ceremony.

"It was a once in a lifetime thing," said Ciftci.

One of his fellow new citizens said Biden's presence made him feel more welcome.

"The vice president has a son in the Army – I know I'm not alone," said Pfc. Derick Grant, Company B, 589th BSB, who moved to the U.S. from Colon City, Panama, in 2004.

Grant said the setting of the ceremony made it better – and served as reminder of "the power of the country I'm working for. We took a palace!"

So far serving the United States has been a positive experience for Grant. He found work after he, his mother and his brother moved to Brooklyn, N.Y., but had always liked the Army and joined in November 2007.

"My first paycheck almost gave me heart attack," said Grant, who performs power generation repair.

He said he enjoys the lifestyle and the opportunities available, like the education benefits. Grant plans on attending Central Texas College after redeploying.

One Soldier shared the celebration with her family.

"My oldest brother and I became citizens. His ceremony was on the sixth of July in the United States. This is a very special time for us," said Sgt. Jayre Romero, of Co. A, 589th BSB. Romero and her family moved to Hialeah, Fla., from San Pedro, Nicaragua, in 1986.

The other Iron Caissons who took the oath were Spc. Siupolufaataualofa Johnson, Co. A, from Samoa, and Spc. Hector Galvan, Co. B, from Mexico City.

SFC becomes 'Top' Avenger during ceremony

By Sgt. Seandale Jackson
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

The Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, gained a new enlisted leader July 16.

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Reid took responsibility of the Avengers from 1st Sgt. Martin Lara during a change-of-responsibility ceremony in the company's hangar.

The position is typically given to a noncommissioned officer whose rank is the same name as the position.

However, with 15 years of service under his belt, Reid's leaders placed their trust in his abilities.

"It is because of his character, competence and commitment he has earned the right to lead a company ahead of his peers," said battalion commander Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt.

Dalcourt and his noncommissioned counterpart, Sgt. Maj. John Taylor, noticed Reid had the characteristics necessary to be a successful first sergeant: knowledge and compassion for Soldiers, Dalcourt said.

Reid said he appreciates the chance he has to lead Soldiers to "perform to the best of their abilities."

"I understand the great opportunity I have been given to be not the acting first sergeant, but the actual first sergeant," Reid said.



Sgt. Maj. John Taylor, senior enlisted leader of 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, passes the Company A guidon to Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Reid, symbolically giving him responsibility for the Soldiers in the company during a change-of-responsibility ceremony in the company's hangar July 16.

Photo by Sgt. Allison Churchill, 41st Fires Bde. PAO

Promotion



Above: Chief Warrant Officer 5 James Gordon (right) promotes Chief Warrant Officer 2 Roger Andujar, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, July 24 at Hangar 49.

Below: Gordon administers the Warrant Officer Oath of Office to Andujar after his promotion.

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson
41st Fires Bde. PAO



MND-S CG dines with, honors troops

Maj. Gen. Rick Nash speaks to Soldiers during a luncheon at the Gunner Inn East Dining Facility July 17. Nash spoke about the future of U.S. Forces in Iraq, the great strides made in al Kut and the fact that there is "a lot of work to be done yet."



Nash presents a commander's coin to Spc. Elijah DeLoach, 589th Brigade Support Battalion chaplain's assistant. DeLoach's boss, Chaplain (Capt.) Ashley Payne, 589th BSB chaplain, told Nash that DeLoach consistently completes assignments beyond expectations. The ceremony took place in the 41st Fires Brigade conference room after lunch.

Nash presents his commander's coin to Pfc. Andre Figueroa, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Brigade, who was recently promoted. Eight Soldiers in all -- six from 41st Fires Bde., and two from 772nd Military Police Company, were recognized for their hard work.



Photos by
Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO

589th BSB leaders thank their support systems



Left: Yahn and Taylor present certificates of appreciation to Staff Sgt. Daniel Byrd and his 287th Sustainment Brigade teammates during the Hail and Farewell ceremony.



Right: Yahn gives Lt. Cmdr. Jose Pehovaz-Diez, electronic warfare officer, the Army Achievement Medal so he can say he "got something from the Army."

Left: Lt. Col. Ina Yahn and Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Taylor, 589th Brigade Support Battalion command team, present certificates and other tokens of appreciation to Maj. Talib of 8th Motorized Transport Regiment, for their friendship and hospitality, during a ceremony at Hangar 49 July 17. Right: Col. Dick Francey, 41st Fires Brigade commander, presents an Army Commendation Medal to Capt. Sheila Howell, 2302 Military Transition Team personnel advisor.



Left: Yahn thanks the Mobile Retrograde Property Assistance Team workers for getting the brigade's vehicle turn-in done in less than a week instead of the estimated two weeks.



Right: The 589th BSB command team thanks the Kellogg, Brown and Root Movement Control Team for their assistance in getting personnel in and out of FOB Delta.

*Photos by Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO*



Romanians say farewell to 'The FOB of Choice'



Left: Friends gather to "make a picture" while waiting for the signal to gear up. Right: Soldiers from the last Romanian contingent on FOB Delta head toward their protective gear before getting on the aircraft taking them straight to Romania. The country has had troops here since 2003.

*Photos by Sgt. Allison Churchill
41st Fires Bde. PAO*



324th NSC starts journey home July 26



Main Body 1 leaves FOB Delta July 26

